

UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION
of
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for
CONVERSATION GAME

Attorney Docket
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CONVERSATION GAME

RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. 119(e) to U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/455,621, filed March 18, 2003 and U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/510,756, filed October 13, 2003, which are expressly incorporated by reference herein.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to games such as table games participated in by individuals or groups of individuals and more particularly to such a game or activity device designed to promote individual or group comments or reactions.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention comprises one or more of the following features or elements in the appended claims or combinations thereof. A conversation game comprising a plurality of hand-held signs is provided. Each sign has a handle portion and a second, generally larger portion for displaying indicia selected to promote individual or group comments, actions or reactions. These signs which may be in the shape of paddles and often referred to hereinafter as paddles are configured to have a front panel and a rear panel for displaying such indicia. It is contemplated that a group such as a family sitting around a table or around a discussion center of some type will have a plurality of these signs available for use to stimulate conversation, slow down conversation or create comments, actions or reactions from members of the group. Some of the various types of indicia that may be provided on the signs will be provided in more detail hereinafter. The signs or paddles may be designed to promote individual or group comments, actions or reactions.

In some cases, each sign or paddle will be constructed to be relatively thin and double-sided to have a front panel and a rear panel for displaying such indicia. The handle portion and the larger portion on which the indicia are printed or otherwise formed may be of the same thickness such that the plurality of signs is stackable to a compact stack for storage and use. Each sign handle portion may be

defined by an axis which bisects the sign's larger portion, the larger portion being generally symmetrical about the handle axis. It will be apparent that the shapes of the larger portions and, for that matter, the shapes of the handles may vary for different lines of product. Generally speaking, the concept is to have small hand-held signs
5 which can be easily stored away and then brought to a table or other discussion area for use by members of the group.

In some cases, the signs may be made relatively smaller in size and have a retainer penetrating through the handle portions of the plurality of signs such that the signs are loosely assembled together for selective display of individual signs.
10 Thus, a young lady may carry an assembly of these signs in her purse for use in conversation with her friends or for passing messages to her peers as she sits in class. The kit which is a part of the present invention may include a sheet or other supply of peel-off indicia means, each representing a particular comment or thought, with each indicia means being attachable to the larger portion of one of the signs to personalize
15 the signs assembled together on the retainer. It is within the scope of the present invention to have a plurality of peel-off or other detachable, perhaps adhesively backed, indicia to place on individual signs, even those which are not retained together in an assembly.

The retainer may be a ring and each handle portion may be formed
20 with an opening through which the retainer ring extends. The ring may have a cross-sectional diameter smaller than the opening through which it extends so that the signs will be loosely held together for ease of use. It will be appreciated that other retainers such as key chains or the like may be used to hold signs in a loosely assembled fashion.

25 Thus, there is provided a plurality of hand-held paddles or signs, each having a hand-grip portion and a generally larger portion extending axially away from the hand-grip portion. The larger portion is illustratively symmetrical about an axis bisecting the larger portion and the hand-grip portion. The larger portion and hand-grip portion may have the same thickness such that the plurality of paddles or signs
30 can be compactly stackable for use or storage. Each larger portion will have a front side and a rear side with indicia selected to promote individual or group comments, actions or reactions. As indicated above, these indicia may be printed in permanent

fashion on the front sides and rear sides of the paddles and other indicia may be made such that it can be temporarily or even permanently attached to the front side or rear side of a paddle. In some cases, a kit will include a plurality of indicia for selective application to the paddle.

5 The present invention, therefore, may comprise a kit for the assembly of personalized signs or paddles for use as a conversation game with indicia means provided for selective application to the paddles. In some cases, the kits will include retainers for holding the hand-held signs or paddles into a loose assembly for use in that fashion. The signs may be provided having various sizes and shapes as well as
10 various thicknesses. It is contemplated that, in some cases, the signs will be sized so that they can be carried around in a purse or other such container for use away from home. In other cases, the signs will be packaged so that they can be stored away and then pulled out and used in a family or other group setting to promote conversation and, in some cases, even more orderly conversation amongst the group.

15 In the drawings:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a sign or paddle displaying "AM I
NEXT?" as indicia;

Fig. 2 is an elevation view showing a sign or paddle displaying "MAY
I TALK" as indicia;

20 Fig 3. is an elevation view showing a sign or paddle displaying "PAY
ATTENTION" as indicia;

Fig. 4 is a perspective view showing a plurality of small signs or
paddles loosely held together by a retainer ring and indicating that "HE'S A HOTTIE"
or some other such indicia which may be adhesively or otherwise attached to a sign or
25 paddle;

Fig. 5 is a fragmentary view of a sheet of peel-off indicia that may be
applied to signs or paddles; and

Fig. 6 is a diagrammatic view of a box or container to indicate that the
present invention may be provided as a kit.

30 Referring specifically to the drawings, it will be seen that a game or a
kit providing a game is illustrated to include a plurality of hand-held signs or paddles
10. Each sign 10 in the plurality of signs will have a handle portion 12 and a

generally larger portion 14 for displaying indicia selected to promote individual or group comments, actions or reactions. It should be understood that as used herein, "larger portion" is illustrated as having larger dimensions than handle portion 12, however, it is within the scope of the disclosure to use a portion 14 having any set of dimensions relative to handle portion 12. The illustrative signs 10 are relatively thin as indicated at 32 in Fig. 1 and double-sided to have a front panel and a rear panel for displaying such indicia. By "relatively thin," it is meant that the signs are made such that they can be relatively thin as compared to their length and width. For example, for some materials, a sign may be only 0.125 inch thick. It will be appreciated that, depending upon the materials and the application, such signs may be as thick as .25 inch thick or thicker. Essentially, by "relatively thin" it is intended to mean that a sign 10 has a thickness which is substantially only a small portion of its length or width.

While such signs may typically be formed of relatively stiff plastic, it will be appreciated that individual signs may be fabricated from a variety of materials utilizing a variety of fabrication techniques. Signs, for example, may be stamped from a sheet plastic material or other sheet material using a steel-rule die contoured to provide the desired shape of the paddle. The illustrative signs 10 can be manufactured of any material suitable to form a handle that can support a second, indicia-displaying portion. For example, the signs 10 may be manufactured of a cork, pressboard, cardboard, plastic, wood, composite, or other material. Some materials, such as cork, pressboard, or cardboard, may be useful in a restaurant or bar atmosphere as a coaster, thereby providing a dual purpose for sign 10. The sign 10 may be used to display a pick-up line.

In some embodiments, the signs will typically have a generally rectangular larger portion 14 for displaying indicia and a centrally located or axially located handle portion 12 for gripping. The axis 16 of paddle 10 is illustrated in Fig. 1. It is contemplated that the indicia or wording will be printed or otherwise placed on the front side or rear side of the enlarged portion 14 of each paddle 10. Typically, the indicia will be printed, screened, stenciled or otherwise applied to the surface of the paddle 10. In some cases, the indicia will be adhesively attached to the surface of the paddle 10.

A typical table-use set of paddles will have each paddle having an enlarged portion 14 such as 6 inches wide and 4 inches tall (or length). It will be appreciated that these dimensions are illustrative and larger or smaller paddles 10 may be provided. The handle 12 which extends downwardly from the central portion of the enlarged portion 14 and illustratively on the axis of the paddle 10 may have a dimension such as 4.5 inches long and 1.5 inches wide. As illustrated, the corners of the paddles may be curved for comfort and convenience such as indicated at 30 in Fig. 3.

A plurality of such paddles 10 as illustrated in Fig. 1-3 may be stacked together in a compact stack for storage and use. A group of 6 to 12 or more of such paddles 10 may comprise a kit for use in a group conversation activity. The paddles 10, of course, will provide messages or comments for use by a person acting as a moderator in a discussion group. For example, a parent in a family discussion may have the stack of paddles 10 ready to use as required. Members of the group may reach over to pick up a paddle 10 to express his or her preference, comment or request.

As suggested in Fig. 4, a plurality of such paddles 100 may be assembled together and loosely retained by a retainer such as the ring 140 which extends through holes 142 in the handle portion 112. The illustratively handles 112 may have a centrally located hole 142 with a diameter larger than the cross-sectional diameter of retainer ring 140 as illustrated in Fig. 4. A plurality of paddles 100 may thus be assembled together and used simply by selecting which paddle contains the appropriate indicia for the occasion.

The present invention contemplates that a plurality of such paddles 10, 100 may be assembled in a kit 148 to be used as desired. A kit 148 may comprise, for example, a plurality of such paddles 10, 100, each of which may have a hole 142 in the handle portion 12, 112, and a retainer ring 140. The kit may comprise a plurality of individual indicia such as a sheet 150 of peel-off comments or remarks 152 to be placed on the panels 100 as suggested by dashed lines 154 in Fig. 4. In some embodiments, each paddle 100 will be somewhat smaller than discussed above in connection with Figs. 1-3. For example, paddles 100 shown in Fig. 4 may be smaller such that a plurality of the paddles may be held together by a retainer 140 and held in

a purse. Each illustrative paddle 100 may have a portion 114 width of $3 \frac{3}{16}$ inches, a portion 114 length or height of 2 inches, a handle 112 length of 2 inches, and a handle 112 width of $1 \frac{1}{16}$ inches. Other dimensions, of course, are contemplated by the present invention. It is contemplated that such a set of paddles 100 may be

5 personalized by the user from the supply of peel-off indicia 150 such as illustrated in Fig. 5. It will be appreciated that such indicia may be adhesively or otherwise attached to the paddles 100, either the larger paddles shown in Figs. 1-3 or the smaller ring-assembled sign shown in Fig. 4. Of course, the assembly suggested in Fig. 4 with the plurality of paddles held together by a retainer ring may be printed, stenciled

10 or screened in the factory and thus supplied pre-labeled or pre-printed.

The sheet 150 may include blank stickers or other attachments which may be personalized. Some indicia may be words, phrases or designs.